1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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closely paralleling that of their Hindu neighbors. On the other hand, their social organization is relatively lacking in the cleavages of caste which are so prevalent all about them. Apart from the village, which is usually composed of a number of patrilineal kin-groups, territorial organization is weakly developed, and the tribe as a whole has never been politically unified so far as historical records indicate.

Even as a unique people the Santal merit special attention. Numbering today over three million, the region they occupy contains the richest deposits of iron, coal and other crucial industrial minerals in all of India. The chief source of their livelihood, at least since the nineteenth century, has been settled agriculture. Prior to the nineteenth century, hunting was also an important livelihood activity, but the great increase in the region's population and subsequent reduction of forest areas has made game extremely scarce; it is now difficult for the inhabitants even to obtain materials for fuel and building purposes. Though the chief source of food and cash is the annual rice crop, a few vegetables are also grown and some fruit trees maintained. Some villages are near enough to a river for fish to be readily obtained, while some villages stock their local ponds. Even prior to the introduction of modern industry in the region, the Santal had ceased to be economically independent. Although they once did some pottery making, weaving, and even iron smelting, they have come to rely almost exclusively on various local Hindu castes for these material products. Women from several low Hindu castes are used frequently as midwives. While almost no Santal are ritually served by Brahmin priests, itinerant Hindu holy men (*sadhu*) visit many Santal villages, consulting horoscopes and offering prayers for a fee or donation.

Most Santal are still agriculturists, but some have turned to

1: Orans E-5 (1957-1958) 1965
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/Jamshedpur/

Introduction

Most Santal are still agriculturists, but some have turned to less time-honored work. The chief industry in which these others are employed is as characteristically modern as the Santal themselves are not. It is the Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO), the largest and oldest modern iron and steel company in India. Since Santal have been employed by TISCO from its founding over fifty years ago, enough time has elapsed for change to become manifest and for the directions of change to become evident.

Jamshedpur, the industrial town which was created to house TISCO, was carved out of the jungle of Singhbhum district, Bihar, in 1908; it owes its location to the rich natural resources of the surrounding area, in which the Santal and other closely related tribes form a substantial part of the population. The population of the city has been drawn from every section of India as well as a number of foreign countries and has grown to more than 218,000. Jamshedpur is extremely atypical compared to other Indian cities—the fact that it is a company town of unprecedented size accounts in large measure for its atypicality. TISCO has from the beginning completely controlled the government of the town, provided housing for most of its workers, operated a school system, and furnished other services. It is a city as much dominated by modern industry as a medieval city was by its cathedral. Traditional institutions, such as temples and socio-political organizations, exist but are weakly developed; the Tata Company, the Tata Workers Union, and the town's competing regional and national political parties are the dominant corporate groups. Caste persists as an institution for regulating marriage, for assigning employment in certain traditionally degrading occupations, and to a certain extent in structuring social interaction. But class in the traditional Western sense is increasingly displacing caste as the

2: Skrefarud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

others) originally belonged to the Kherwars, especially to the Kisku and Baske septs. It is also told that those who left the Kherwars and became Dekos spread in all directions.

We are here touching on one of India's problems, and a few words may be permitted. First as regards the wanderings of the Santals, as they may be observed at present and probably are a repetition of what has happened in earlier times. The Santals are among the very best of clearers of jungle in India, themselves originally a forest people. But they have not reached the stage of being really good agriculturists; it must also be remembered that they have very little understanding of the use of money; they may be said to know the value of a pice, but do not know the value of the rupee. What often follows is this: they get into the hands of the moneylenders who will do all they can to get hold of the fields cleared by the Santals, who frequently will not know or think of any other way of getting out of their difficulties than by emigrating to some other place, always towards the rising of the sun. Combined with this we have their backwardness as agriculturists: they have little idea of getting all that is possible out of the lands they have cleared or are occupying. They are a prolific race; the time comes when they have not enough land to support themselves. The result is, that either the whole family, or some of them, will go away, either to find fresh jungle to clear and occupy, or to work for others as labourers. It is in their blood to seek fresh fields; as they often are heard to say, they have a wish "to see land". Now if the whole family does not move away, some will stay; those who stay will gradually get under the influence of the more civilized neighbours and may ultimately become attached to these.

After this digression a little more about the traditions. As regards Mandǫ Sin (by some also called Madhwa or Madhǫ) some have a very detailed story, something like a folk-tale. A servant girl is stated to have been with child by some of the young men of "the kings", who threatened to kill her if she revealed anything. She bore her child in the forest and left him there, but came every day to suckle him. This went on for two months; then one day the mother did not come quickly; the child became hungry and commenced to cry. Some Kisku girls heard this, found the child and brought it home with them. They were convinced that the child was that of the girl; nothing was said about this, but they asked the girl to take charge of the child, saying that they had adopted it. The child grew up, became very intelligent and clever in all kinds of work. The king gave him office, and he gradually became indispensable. After some time the king asked him whether they had given him a wife; and as this was not the case the king ordered him to bring all the principal men to him; he wanted to ask them the reason for this. In spite of orders and persuasion they would not come and would not be brought, although the king sent elephants, horses, etc., to carry them. The king became angry and ordered Madhwa to go and apply sindur to all the daughters of these men, to the girls he might care to make his wives. He consequently went to these men and asked them whether they would

2: Skrefsrud M-5 (1870-1871) 1942 AW42 Santal AW42

From Jheṭ to Bhador (i. e., from the middle of May to the middle of August) they do agricultural work. Then they plough from morning to noon, and later on they work making ricefield-ridges and so on. First they sow millets and jungle corn, later janhę millet, maize, bajṛa, kǫdę, raheṛ, ghaṅgra, and sutri[1]. After this they sow paddy for transplanting. They hoe the maize (in this the women help them). They do the first ploughing for paddy-planting; thereupon they plough the second time, thereupon plough the third time; they also make ready the ricefield ridges; they make the fields muddy and harrow; then they pull the paddy seedlings out. (To plant the paddy is women's work.)

At this time they sow cotton and tilmiṅ oilseed[2] in the course of the month of San (middle of July to middle of August). In Bhador (middle of August to middle of September) they plough the fields for hǫṛęć and surguja[3] and sow these. They harvest the maize. In this work and in hoeing the cotton the women help them. They harvest the iṛi, gundli, kǫdę, and erba millets[4]. In this work also the women assist them. The men thresh.

In the month of Dasāe (middle of September to middle of October) they plough the homestead field where the maize was, and sow mustard seed, and they harvest and thresh janhę millet and the early paddy. In Aghāṛ (middle of November to middle of December) they dig and plane the threshing-floor, and together with the women they harvest the paddy, cut the bajṛa and tilmiṅ, cut the raheṛ, pluck the ghaṅgra and sutri, and pull out the hǫṛęć and surguja. The women alone pull out the cotton. When the men have carted all this up to the threshing-floor, they spread it out on this, and joining cattle together they thresh. Having threshed out the seed they throw the straw away, having winnowed the grain they make a heap of it, and having twisted straw-ropes and straw-strings they put it into bundles. The other crops they beat out and put into bundles. Thereupon they cart all to their houses. In the month of Magh (middle of January to middle of February) they harvest the mustard and cut the thatching grass. Now the agricultural work is finished.

Besides all this work the men have all business with the money-lenders, and they pay the rent to the village headman. Men and women help each other to press oil in the oil-press. They do not make oil from the mustard and tilmiṅ; they sell this. They make oil from several kinds of fruit: kūiṇḍi, bạru, kujri, bando, boṅga sarjǫm, eraḍǫm, lǫpǫṅ, kǫrǫṅj, nim, and others[5].

[1] Janhę is Paspalum scrobiculatum, L.; bajṛa, Sorghum vulgare, Pers.; kǫdę, Eleusine coracana, Gaertn.; raheṛ, Cajanus indicus, Sprang.; ghaṅgra, Dolichos Catjang, Willd.; sutri, Phaseolus calcaratus, Roxb.
[2] Tilmiṅ, Sesamum indicum, DC. [3] Hǫṛęć, Dolichos biflorus, L. Surguja, Galactia abyssinica, Cass.
[4] Iṛi, Panicum Crus-galli, L.; gundli, Panicum miliare, Lamarck; kǫdę, Eleusine coracana, Gaertn.; erba, Setaria italica, Kunth. [5] Kūiṇḍi, the fruit of the Mahua tree, Bassia latifolia, Roxb.; bạru, Schleichera trijuga, L.; kujri, Celastrus paniculatus, Willd.; bando, Spatholobus Roxburghii, Benth.; boṅga sarjǫm, Ventilago calyculata, Tulasne; eraḍǫm, Ricinus communis, L.; lǫpǫṅ, Terminalia belerica, Roxb.; kǫrǫṅj, Pongamia glabra, Vent.; nim, Melia Azadirachta, L.

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4, 8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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735 293 154 sorrows. It is a pathetic sight to see young Santals keep sober till they marry, and then grow old suddenly as cares and anxieties of life come to them, when they plunge headlong in a sodden life.

181 The rigours of their life on the earth are somewhat overcome by the objects of material culture we have noted in the foregoing pages. But one can easily see that they are crude devices of a primitive world, not serving their purpose well in the [171] twentieth century. But, one must however notice that the level of culture presented by the Santal is on a par with that of the rest of the hill tribes of what may be called the Central Belt of India, which is a homogeneous culture-area in all important respects.

Conclusion

174 181 224 241 433 As we conclude the review of Santal economic life, we find that the actual stage reached by the tribe in its material culture is still primitive. Their traditions make it clear that there was a time in the life of the Santals when they lived a semi-hunting nomadic life, perpetually moving in quest of food. But the picture we have got in the foregoing pages reveals a people who have finally accepted the life of settled agriculturists.

177 As, however, we look closely to the objects of Santal material culture, we notice similarities with

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CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL FABRIC

462 171 The very existence of society depends upon the mutual co-operation of the sexes. This, however, varies from age to age and clime to clime. In Burma one will witness men-folk droning away their lives in fumes of cigar, while their fascinating mannish counterparts keep the balance by developing the male vigour for themselves. In rural Bengal one will see an opposite picture of women being gaoled in the hearth and home and not generally called upon to share the out-door life of the husband on quest of bread. But that the female can be the other half of the male, as the term a partner in life connotes, can be seen amongst the aboriginals, specially the Santals.

Division of Labour

462 22 Thus both the men and women can be seen in Mayurbhanj to hunt and catch fish, gather fruits and edible leaves. The Santal husband and wife 462 241 jointly engage in agriculture to transplant seedlings, to break clods and to reap corn. But here the roads part. Women do not sow seeds, but threshing is their special business and no man will undertake these tasks, unless he is without a woman member

Sr Mukherjea O, Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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in his house. Ploughing, however, is an exclusive privilege of men; and women are debarred from it as a social taboo. The penalty for breach of this custom consists in a fine and ceremonial purification by the tribe. If you question a Santal on the genesis of the institution, he will tell you the myth that in ancient times when a woman first took the plough, the cattle in the yoke went on straight ahead and she could not make them deviate either to the left or to the right according to her will, when lo and behold, out opened a mighty river from under the furrows to the consternation of everybody.

In conjugal life, the women like their other Indian sisters are self-sacrificing. She will, we have already seen, eat last of all after feeding other members of the family. We asked a woman point-blank, "Why don't you dine along with men? Have you no such right?" "Our rights are equal," she answered with a genial smile, "but we choose not to exercise it." The way, however, she exercises her equal rights impresses one so much that the old Sirdar of Muruda, Mayurbhanj, was definitely of opinion that the Santal women work more than their male partners.

The equality of status, the woman claimed for her, extends to the drinking cup as well; but a distinction was drawn by her paradoxically enough when she blurted out, "We drink like men but do

3: Mukherjea O. Y-4, 5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42

So they dance on and on in a non-stop manner and may not finish before two days.

This dance may also take place as a mark of joy when volunteers help a Santal farmer who has no helping hand to aid him in his agriculture. According to custom, such help is always extended, and the farmer entertains the co-villagers at a thanks-giving party when "Dòn̄" is danced after a liberal drink of rice-beer.

One who studies the "Dòn̄" dances cannot but be struck by the fact that the suggestive hip and body movements, special to the dance, can have only one meaning viz. recreating in artistic forms the human urge to procreation. The very object of the dance, associated as it is with marriage ceremonies, was stated by an old Santal to be a form of magic, where the married pair might unite in love and affection and get children so that the Santals might increase in number.

Jhikà ènèc'

"Jhikà" is the closing item in a dance programme, just following "Dòn̄". After a "Jhikà," the dance closes automatically.

Here men and women form a circle, but they do not entwine the hands. The musicians, as before, form an inner circle. The dancers take two

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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and night. As a rule they cook their food outside, but always have a fire-place inside. During the cold season they generally cook their food inside, the result being that the house specially at night, is suffocatingly full of smoke and every thing becomes covered with soot. This does not, however, seem to affect the Santals much. In the bed-room they store their rice and all other belongings, and the fowls are kept too in that room at night. It is, of course, not possible to keep such a house clean, even if they tried to do so.

Agriculture :—The Santals before becoming agriculturists were probably in the hunting stage. Still, nothing pleases them so much as to be out for hunting, they even now observe the "Dehiri hunting", which is an annual hunt. During the time of the annual hunt the Dehiri priest performs certain ceremonies to propitiate "Sin Bonga" to avert calamity during hunting. All these suggest that prior to becoming agriculturists the Santals were in the hunting stage. At present the Santals are typical agriculturists. There is no authentic record when the Santal first started tilling the soil. Rev. Bodding in his memoir, "How the Santals live" has mentioned their first attempt at cultivation in the following words :—

"It is just possible that one of their first attempts to get something out of the soil may have been something like what is now called 'kurau', a mode of cultivation that is said to have been used also by Santals in former years, but is not practised by them at the present time, so far as is known. It is, however, still kept up by the Paharias living on the hills of the Santal country. A piece of jungle is cut down high up

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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241 171 en a steep hill-side; when the wood of the felled trees is dry, generally toward the end of the hot season, it is burned. In this way the ground is cleared, and when the rains set in, the seed is sown without any ploughing. The present-day Paharias make small holes with a crow-bar and drop the seed into the holes, especially of bajra, Sorghum vulgare Pers., of maize and of a few other kinds. This is all, except that they may 241 pluck away weeds. It is said that when the Santals in former times followed a similar mode of cultivation they simply sowed the seed (especially bajra) at the top of the cleared hill-side, the spreading being left to the water of the rains flowing down; in some cases, a branch of a thorn-tree (Zizyphus Jujuba Lam.) is said to have been pressed into a flat shape and dragged over the ground to spread the seed".

243 [46] 556 [262] [462] From early morning till evening they work in the field. Rice is their staple food; in it wealth is reckoned and from it they obtain their drink. Both sexes work in the field. Every man tries to secure agricultural fields near his house and also near a streamlet flowing. They cultivate their soil and also gather natural produce when their crops do not grow due to want of rain or for some other reasons. The Santals prepare two kinds of rice field. One type is adjoining their houses, the other is at some distance away from their houses, which is on high land.

Preparation of ricefield :— After selecting the site, the Santals clear the field of jungle and vegetation. Then they surround it with ridges but if the land is slopy then they make the ridge only on the lower [412] [407] side. With the hoe and a heavy leveller (karha) they

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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778 the last is a Mowah tree; on its foot a stone representing the deity *Gosain Era* is kept. This is the most important one and is known as Lady of the Grove.

296 241 In the Santal villages there is a succession of festivals throughout the year, nearly all connected with agricultural operations. The chief of these is the *Sohras* or *Banda parab* or the harvest festival, celebrated in the Bengali month Pous (i.e., at the beginning of the month of January) after the rice crop of the year has been harvested. This festival generally lasts for five days. Previously there was no fixed date, villagers of one locality performing this festival one day, others performing on some other day. But now-a-days the [178] Deputy Commissioner of the Santal Parganas fixes the [211] date for this festival, and this date is proclaimed by a man with a *sal* branch in his hand in every *hut*. Before this *parab*, Santal women buy large earthen vessels and replace old ones which they bought in the previous year. When the day has been fixed all houses prepare "handia" (rice beer) and people invite their relatives. [793] The night before the festival commences, the *Naiks* [784] is religiously-abstinent for before any sacrifice the [834] sacrificer must not have relations with a woman and [624] should sleep on the ground on a mat. At day break the *goddet* goes round and collects sacrificial fowls from every house. In the middle of the forenoon the *Naiks* goes near a tank together with some of the [793] village people, the *goddet* taking the fowls with him. [782] The *Naiks* bathes and then sacrifices the fowls to the different *bongas* after which the villagers cook the fowls with rice and eat them, and also drink rice beer. After this the villagers go to *Kulimucha* (i.e.,

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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the meadow on the outskirts of the village), and there they draw rectangular compartments side by side, and in each compartment they put some adwa rice and in one compartment they put an egg of a hen. They then call the cowboys with the cattle and make the latter tread out the above figures. The cow which treads on and breaks the egg or simply smells it, is caught. They wash her feet, anoint the horns with oils and also smear vermilion on them. The idea is that the owner of the cow will have good luck. The cow is then lifted up and carried on the shoulder and put down before the *manjhi* (headman) whom the owner salutes and then all elderly men of the village. This the Santals call *Gote puja*.

On the second day in each house of the village within the cowshed the eldest member of the house performs a *puja*. In the centre of the cowshed he draws a circle and within it he puts adwa rice and paints vermilion and kills white and red fowls and sacrifices pig to *Marang Buru*, the household gods and their ancestors. All the men of the village go with their ploughyokes, battle-axes and knives to bathe. On that day no outsiders are allowed to enter the house. The Santals call this *Gora bonga puja*.

The third day they set wooden poles in the village street, a bundle of straw being tied on the top of the poles, put some flowers on the poles and also tie five pieces of bread made of powdered rice. Then a bull, after washing and smearing oil on its horns and painting vermilion on them, is tied to the pole. Then the bachelors and little boys of the village begin to drum, dance and scream so furiously that the animals becomes excited and begin to jump. To the horns of all the cows and buffaloes of the villages a piece of straw is

41 Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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796 241 tied and vermilion with mustard oil painted. Friends come and go visiting one another, all (both male and female) more or less drunk and wild with excitement. [624] After all is over, the young people drink and eat in the house of the *jog-manjhi*.

[786] The other two days are for nothing but to enjoy life, merry-making going on in full swing with full sex license. For the five days and nights during which the festival lasts the Santals indulge in a veritable saturnalia giving themselves up to dancing, eating, drinking, singing and sexual license. Although this license does not allow adultery, nor does it sanction intercourse between persons of the same sept, yet if the latter offence is committed it is punished less severely than at other times.

796 **Sakrat Festival.** After this another festival known as *Sakrat* takes place on the last day of the month of [779] Pous (December and January). This is an imitation of [226] the Hindu *Pous Sankranti* festival. The Santals (only males) go out fishing to the streamlet a day before the actual festival. From the morning of that day the women are busy preparing cakes of parched rice. [262] The men folk eat curd and parched rice (chura) and go out for hunting in the morning. The cakes are first offered to the ancestors and then eaten. In the after- [526] noon the *Jogmanjhi* collects all the adult males of the [624] village in an adjoining field for archery and other sports. After that in the evening they dance and sing, drink rice beer and spend the day in various kinds of [262] amusements. On the third day they go out to the fair or market (*hut*) after eating a preparation of rice and dal boiled together.

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796 [787] about the happenings of the coming year. The *Naike* then washes the *bongas* and throws the surplus water over them, whereupon the *bongas* jump up howling. Then they return home.

796 798 Next day they again go to the *Jahersthan*. When they see a fine *sal* tree in bloom, *Moreka* shoots an arrow into it, while *Marang Buru* climbs it and cuts down the flowering branches, *Jahar-era* receiving the flowers in a basket. On the road *Marang Buru* gathers mowah blossoms. In the *Jahersthan* the *bongas* are 796 again placed on a mat under the shed, and the *Naike*, 798 sitting in front of them, sacrifices the fowls, and places a 793 bunch of flowers with a mowah flower before each *bonga*. [782] The *bongas* suck the blood of the fowls, whereupon the *Naike* washes their feet. *Jahar-era* doing the same to the *Naike*. The *Naike*, together with his wife who is now brought to the *Jahersthan* for the purpose, eats one of the fowls cooked with rice; some of the villagers eat the rest in the *Jahersthan*. After this all leave, except the *Naike* who remains alone in [782] the *Jahersthan*. The villagers then proceed to sacrifice fowls and pigs in their own houses, and to eat and drink. In the afternoon they go to the *Jahersthan* to bring the *Naike* back and the rest of the day is spent in general merry making. The women also enjoy to their heart's content.

• 241 796 The Santals perform several festivals before sowing seeds and also after reaping when they offer the first fruits to the village deities.

[778] **Erok-Puja**: This festival they perform before sowing seeds in the newly ploughed field. They celebrate it in

4: Biswas D, E-3, 4 (1931-1945) 1956
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the *Jahersthan* in the month of Asadh (June-July). *Naike* and his assistant *Kudum Naike* perform the function. Five fowls are sacrificed in the *Jahersthan*. After the function they cook these fowls and eat them. the heads of the fowls are taken by the *Naike* and *Kudum Naike*.

Harier Sim: The Santals hold this festival at the time of the sprouting of rice, which takes place in the month of Sraban (July-August). Fowls are sacrificed to all the tribal and village deities and prayers are offered for a bountiful harvest.

Janthar Puja (Nawai) This festival is held in the month of Agrahayan (November-December) in the *Jahersthan* when the first gathering of the winter rice crop is offered Similarly the first gathering of the millets is offered in the sacred grove in the month of Bhadra (August-September) which the Santals call Irigrudli-nawai. The *Naike* reaps a little of the crop and offers to the village deities in the *Jahersthan*, and ties a twig round the five trees of the *Jahersthan* The *Naike* at the time of uttering prayer pours some milk on the offerings. Similar offerings are made by each householder of the village to the spirits of their ancestors.

Mak' More: This festival is observed by the Santals generally at intervals of five years or so in the *Jahersthan* as a result of vows made at times of distress or epidemics. Fowls are sacrificed and a white goat is sacrificed in the name of the village community to *Mokroko*, one of the five deities of Santals which they worship in the *Jahersthan*. The flesh of the sacrified

St Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

Sorup and Haru

Mañjhi were two brothers. Sorup Mañjhi left Bogri because of the elephants, came to Raipur and settled. He had established himself well at the end of a year or two, so he told his younger brother: 'Leave Bogri, where the elephants are on the increase. Some day you will be trampled on and killed. Come with me.' Haru Mañjhi thought to himself: 'True enough, many men have been killed; perchance they will kill me.' Thinking thus, he took all his children, left Bogri and came to Raipur. From Rautora in Raipur they established a village in Barikul, Sorup Mañjhi saying to his brother: 'Go to, brother, put up your huts and stay at Barikul.' Then Haru Mañjhi went out with his children, his cattle and his goats, and built his huts there. He had four boys and two girls; the girls they brought with them from Bogri, and the four boys were born in Barikul. He obtained sons-in-law for his daughters to live with them, and one or two tenants came together. In this way the village increased to many houses." Wild elephants, of which there are not so many now as formerly, do still on occasion cause great damage to ripening crops. Barikul was founded five generations ago, a period of about one hundred years. At that time there was also a possibility that by moving his abode the Santal could regain a measure of independence. The Santals have been spoken of as formerly "nomadic".[1] It may be that in the strict sense of the word they were in some remote period nomads. For any period of which we have record, however, they have been agriculturalists, though food-gathering and hunting provide them with important subsidiary occupations. Their migrations have been due to pressure of one kind and another. They prefer to move to forest lands where they will have a hard struggle to establish new settlements than to remain where they have to defend their holdings and their livelihood against hostile forces, whether these be wild animals, malignant actions directed against individuals or the community from the unseen world, or the oppression of landlords and moneylenders.

The last cause operated to produce a great northward movement in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and finally goaded them into rebellion. The Santal rebellion has been frequently described.[2] It took place in an area remote from the Bankura district, but it has to be mentioned because it created

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Bengal District Gazetteers: Santal Parganas*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley, Calcutta, 1910.

[2] J. H. Hutton, *Modern India and the West*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley, Oxford, 1941. Chapter on the Primitive Tribes, pp. 417–44. Also bibliography.

As the days lengthen and become warmer, other activities find their place in the routine. When the first rain has fallen the men begin to dig up the pits of rotted cow manure beside their homes, carry loads of manure to the fields, and first plough the beds where the seed rice will be sown. At the same period they carry out repairs to their houses, and the walls of new houses begin to rise. Some walls are built by constructing a screen of thin sticks on which a mud plaster is fastened, but most of the walls are built by adding a layer of wet clay to the layers which have previously dried in the sun. Timber for rafters and posts is brought from the forest, and is not always paid for. Bamboos are cut and sliced; they are needed as a foundation for the thatch. Home-made rope is prepared. Rice straw is the material commonly used for roofing.

At this time some men devote their energies to trapping and snaring. A party of men may be formed for digging out a colony of field rats which will supplement the diet. Many varieties of bird traps and snares are in use. Some have insects attached to them as bait, with birdlime to snare the birds. Others are set on the ground to catch partridge with ingenious arrangements of slip-knots and a captive bird in the centre to act as a decoy. Some of the operations call for elaborate preparation. Nets are taken down from under the rafters where they have hung since the previous year. The men seek out pools of water which may be still left in some shady hollow of the forest when most of the water has dried, for there the birds will come to drink. Traps are formed by nets, or by baskets attached by a string to where one of the men sits waiting to pull it and entrap the bird. On an April day in Barikul two parties of men set out on trapping expeditions. One of them went to a distant forest and returned with three peacocks. The other party spent the day near the banks of a nearby stream and gathered three-score birds, including doves, grey partridges, Indian drongos weaver birds and crow pheasants, all of which are eaten by the Santals.

At the same season the women find new employment. One of the commonest of the trees growing in the villages, the fields and the forests is the *malkom* (*Bassia latifolia*, Roxb.); it has thick sepalled succulent flowers during the spring. These flowers fall from the trees during the early hours of the morning, and the women and girls rise early to collect them. They are used in a variety of ways. When dried they provide either a nutritious cattle food or a supplement for human diet. They are used in

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sand on the pathways becomes unbearably hot for our feet. Pigs were killed at dawn, cut, and the meat was roasted first thing so that it would be ready when the people returned home. The day turned out to be very warm. Some men went into the village of G—— because of their thirst to get a drink of beer, and they said: 'One pice worth of beer from G—— is as good as six pice of beer from that other place.' " The market is the main shopping centre for the villagers. There are cloth stalls and stalls of imported trinkets and ornaments. Potters, weavers, blacksmiths, purveyors of "medicines" and many others display their wares. The Santals may have grain for sale in a good year; they sell fowls and vegetables and buy their salt and cooking oil regularly, with other commodities at need. The market is a great place for the exchange of gossip, for meeting friends and relatives; it is here that many flirtations begin and matches are set in hand.

Nevertheless, the main business of the Santals' life, round which most of their activities centre, is to wrest from the poor soil the greatest possible amount of food. The struggle leaves little time for philosophizing, but they do sometimes crystallize in a phrase some bitter lesson from experience, as when they say: "Rain in the morning, like a friendship that is easily made, does not last." They work as hard as their social obligations allow. There is nothing distinctive in their methods of agriculture, and for generations they have been accustomed to settled cultivation and the use of the plough. The division of labour between men and women, the taboo against women handling the plough, they share with the surrounding culture. They observe the same propitious days and seasons for sowing and reaping as their neighbours. A great authority on the Santals has said:[1] "They are on their way to becoming agriculturalists, but are, as yet, far behind. . . . They have not as yet learnt the need for and the benefits of weeding and manuring, or of changing the crops, and much more. For example, they do not take proper care of their cattle. These are mostly herded by children, who use much of the time for their own games and pleasures. When the paddy is harvested, the cattle are permitted to roam about. A direct result of this is that it is impossible for people to have any crops standing after the middle of December or thereabouts; the cattle would

[1] P. O. Bodding, *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore*, Pt. III, "How the Santals live", *Memoirs of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1940, Vol. X, No. 3, p. 434.

5a Culshaw M-5 (1932-1943) 1949 AW42 Santal AW42

[233] eat all; and the Santals only very rarely fence anything in." The same statement could be applied to the backwardness of Indian peasant agriculture in general, and although it presents a recognizable picture it is somewhat unfair. It fails to take account of the formidable difficulties in the way of the Santals over which they have no control, and it ignores the fact that there is among them a fund of inherited practical wisdom and acquired skill of no mean order.